

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 276

September 15, 1999, 7:14 p.m.
Page S-10921 Temp. Record

TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS/Marital Status in the Census

SUBJECT: Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000 . . . H.R. 2084. Helms amendment No. 1677.

ACTION: AMENDMENT AGREED TO, 94-0

SYNOPSIS: As received from the House, H.R. 2084, the Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000, will provide \$50.7 billion in net new budget resources (budget authority, trust fund ceilings, and exempt obligations). The Senate-reported version of the bill will provide \$49.5 billion in net new budget resources, which is \$1.6 billion more than provided last year.

The Helms amendment would express the sense of the Senate that the Census Bureau: "has wrongfully decided not to include marital status on the census questionnaire to be distributed to the majority of Americans for the 2000 decennial census; and should include marital status on the short form census questionnaire to be distributed to the majority of American households for the 2000 census." The amendment would make 8 findings: the survival of American culture is dependent upon the survival of the sacred institution of marriage; the decennial census is required by section 2 of article 1 of the Constitution of the United States, and has been conducted in every decade since 1790; the decennial census has sought information on marital status from every American household since 1880; the 2000 decennial census will mark the first decennial census since 1880 in which marital status will not be a question included on the census questionnaire distributed to the majority of American households; the United States Census Bureau has removed marital status from the short form census questionnaire to be distributed to the majority of American households in the 2000 decennial census and placed that category of information on the long form census questionnaire to be distributed only to a sample of the population in that decennial census; every year more than \$100 billion in Federal funds are allocated based on the data collected by the Census Bureau; recorded data on marital status provides a basic foundation for the development of Federal policy; and census data showing an exact account of the numbers of people who are married, single, or divorced provides critical information which serves as an indicator on the prevalence of marriage in society.

(See other side)

YEAS (94)				NAYS (0)		NOT VOTING (6)	
Republican (52 or 100%)		Democrats (42 or 100%)		Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (3)	Democrats (3)
Abraham	Hutchinson	Akaka	Kennedy			Chafee- ²	Breaux- ²
Allard	Hutchison	Baucus	Kerrey			Domenici- ²	Daschle- ²
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Bayh	Kerry			McCain- ²	Wellstone- ^{2AY}
Bennett	Jeffords	Biden	Kohl				
Bond	Kyl	Bingaman	Landrieu				
Brownback	Lott	Boxer	Lautenberg				
Bunning	Lugar	Bryan	Leahy				
Burns	Mack	Byrd	Levin				
Campbell	McConnell	Cleland	Lieberman				
Cochran	Murkowski	Conrad	Lincoln				
Collins	Nickles	Dodd	Mikulski				
Coverdell	Roberts	Dorgan	Moynihan				
Craig	Roth	Durbin	Murray				
Crapo	Santorum	Edwards	Reed				
DeWine	Sessions	Feingold	Reid				
Enzi	Shelby	Feinstein	Robb				
Fitzgerald	Smith, Bob (I)	Graham	Rockefeller				
Frist	Smith, Gordon	Harkin	Sarbanes				
Gorton	Snowe	Hollings	Schumer				
Gramm	Specter	Inouye	Torricelli				
Grams	Stevens	Johnson	Wyden				
Grassley	Thomas						
Gregg	Thompson						
Hagel	Thurmond						
Hatch	Voinovich						
Helms	Warner						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

Compiled and written by the staff of the Republican Policy Committee—Larry E. Craig, Chairman

Those favoring the amendment contended:

For reasons unknown bureaucrats at the Census Bureau have decided that finding out Americans' marital status is not important enough to include as a question in the decennial census questionnaire that most Americans (83 percent) will receive in the upcoming census. For the first time since 1880 there will be no data collection on that subject. We are appalled at this change. Unlike Census Bureau bureaucrats, we fully understand that we need that information to make critical policy decisions. Marriage is the building block on which all successful civil societies have been based. As marriage rates decline, poverty rates, crime rates, drug abuse rates, and school dropout rates climb. Marriage is a social contract between a man and a woman, in which each commits to devote the rest of his or her life to the other and to their children. When that contract weakens or fails social pathologies inevitably follow and civil societies crumble. The institution of marriage is under a great deal of pressure in our country and we are determined to relieve some of the burdens in order to strengthen it. For instance, we are determined to remove the huge marriage tax penalty from all families, including single-earner families. We need the most accurate information possible on marriage trends in order to make wise policy decisions that will strengthen marriage in America rather than contribute to its further erosion. At the same time as Census bureaucrats bizarrely decided that marital status was not a matter worth asking 83 percent of Americans about, they decided that race was so important that they included 2 questions on it on the short-form questionnaire. We do not know how the Census Bureau came to the conclusions that it has reached, but it has made a grievous mistake in judgment in deciding not to ask about marital status. This amendment expresses the Senates strong disagreement with that poor judgment. We urge all Members to support this amendment.

While favoring the amendment, some Senators expressed the following reservations:

The Census Bureau did not act cavalierly in removing the marital status question. That question is not needed for purposes of deciding voting districts, it is not mandated like some of the other questions on the short form, and Congress had ordered it to shorten the short form. Further, the statisticians at the Census Bureau report that they will be able to get statistically relevant information from the long form. Finally, Members should be aware that the Census Bureau has already printed half of the short forms it will need, and to make it start over again will entail huge costs. We will vote for this amendment because we agree that the question should not have been removed, but we still think that the Census Bureau is being unfairly criticized for its action.

No arguments were expressed in opposition to the amendment.